

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L VICTORIA 370

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM

SUBJECT: DRAFT HUMAN RIGHTS PLAN FOR SEYCHELLES

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REF: A) STATE 139160, B) STATE 145280

1. IN EMBASSY'S VIEW, DRAFT HUMAN RIGHTS PLAN (REF B) PROVIDES EXCELLENT ACCOUNT OF HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN SEYCHELLES PRIOR TO JUNE 5 COUP D'ETAT AND ACCURATE SUMMARY OF GUARANTEES CONTAINED IN ABROGATED 1976 CONSTITUTION. IT ALSO PRESENTS AS REALISTIC AN ASSESSMENT OF SHORT TO MEDIUM TERM TRENDS AS IS POSSIBLE IN PRESENT UNSETTLED PERIOD OF POLICY EVOLUTION AND COMPETING INTRA-GOVERNMENTAL VIEWPOINTS.

2. WE BELIEVE PRESIDENT RENE PERSONALLY WILL PROBABLY WISH TO RETAIN HUMAN RIGHTS GUARANTEES IN FORMER CONSTITUTION AND MAINTAIN IMPARTIAL AND INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY TO SAFEGUARD INDIVIDUAL LIBERTIES. MOREOVER, ALTHOUGH SEYCHELLES' POLITICAL HISTORY IS ONLY LITTLE MORE THAN A DECADE OLD, DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND STRICT OBSERVANCE OF INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS ARE DEEPLY EMBEDDED IN SEYCHELLES PEOPLE. SERIOUS INFRINGEMENTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS COULD ONLY BE CARRIED OUT WITH HIGH RISK OF POPULAR BACKLASH.

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3. ON OTHER HAND, HOWEVER, IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT A NUMBER OF RENE'S INFLUENTIAL SUBORDINATES, INCLUDING SOME MINISTERS, MAY NOT SHARE WHAT WE CONSIDER TO BE RENE'S POSITIVE VIEWPOINT ON HUMAN RIGHTS. IN ADDITION, RELATIVELY UNSTABLE POLITICAL SCENE, WHICH WE EXPECT TO CONTINUE FOR SOME TIME, MAY CAUSE SECURITY AUTHORITIES TO IMPINGE ON HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES REGARDLESS OF GUARANTEES WHICH MAY BE INCLUDED IN NEW CONSTITU-

TION OR POPULAR DISAPPROVAL RESULTING FROM GOVERNMENT ACTIONS.

4. CONCUR THAT NONE OF THREE OPTIONS CAN BE EXPECTED TO BE HIGHLY EFFECTIVE. HOWEVER, CONSIDER THAT OPTION BRAVO WOULD BE marginally more effective than option ALFA. PRIOR TO COUP, APPROXIMATELY HALF OF POPULATION (INCLUDING MOST OF ECONOMIC ELITE) WERE MANCHAM SUPPORTERS. SINCE NEW GOVERNMENT HAS MADE LITTLE, IF ANY, HEADWAY IN ENLISTING COOPERATION LET ALONE LOYALTY OF PRO-MANCHAM GROUP, BELIEVE SECURITY CONCERNS WILL REMAIN PARAMOUNT FOR INDEFINITE PERIOD. DO NOT BELIEVE ANY ADDITIONAL GESTURES BY U.S. AT THIS TIME WOULD SIGNIFICANTLY ALTER VIEW OF NEW GOVERNMENT ON PERCEIVED REQUIREMENT FOR VIGILANCE AND TOUGH APPROACH TO PUBLIC SECURITY QUESTIONS. ON OTHER HAND, BELIEVE RENE IS KEENLY AWARE OF U.S. CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND WOULD BE RECEPTIVE TO PRIVATE APPROACH PROPOSED IN OPTION BRAVO.

5. MINOR CORRECTION: ACCORDING GOVERNMENT STATISTICIAN, PER CAPITA GNP IN 1976 WAS APPROXIMATELY DOLS. 580 VICE 500 PER ANNUM AND IS WELL ABOVE DOLS. 600 AT PRESENT. MATTSON

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